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From: Gray, David
Sent: Tue 4/10/2018 2:52:49 PM
Subject: draft - press release

All – I made some changes to the draft press release for your consideration and comment. We are planning to make this announcement next Monday, April 16. Please send me your comments by tomorrow Wednesday April 11 at noon. We are also coordinating with Cherokee Nation.
David

EPA completes Illinois River Watershed Models

Media contact: Joe Hubbard or Jennah Durant, R6Press@epa.gov or 214-665-2200

DALLAS – (April XX, 2018) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed the Illinois River Watershed Basin and Lake Tenkiller models and released them to the partnering agencies for use. The EPA partnered with Arkansas, Oklahoma and the Cherokee Nation to develop the robust, scientifically defensible water quality models. Partner agencies can now use the models to design measures to reduce phosphorus loadings from sources in northeast Oklahoma and northwest Arkansas.

"These tools are a great examples of how cooperative federalism works by helping partnering agencies achieve their long-term goals," said EPA Regional Administrator Anne Idsal. "Over the years we have made great progress by working with states, tribes and local agencies in improving conditions throughout the watershed and we look forward to continuing this effort."

The models simulate conditions within the Illinois River Watershed and in Lake Tenkiller. In doing so, the models can be used to forecast how different pollution control scenarios, evaluate options and their ability to improve water quality. EPA completed calibration of the watershed and lake models as well as a sensitivity and uncertainty evaluation for those models. Within a few weeks, the EPA will convene the technical Workgroup to share information about both models and discuss next steps with the partnering agencies to achieve the agreed upon a rolling 30-day geometric mean Phosphorus criterion of 0.037mg/L for the watershed.

Both states have committed to sharing the models and information with stakeholders within the impacted areas, and encouraging feedback and involvement as pollution control strategies are developed within their jurisdictions. Partner agencies anticipate a joint release of these strategies this summer.

Since 2003, Arkansas and Oklahoma have been working cooperatively to protect and improve water quality in the designated scenic rivers and to avoid costly and protracted litigation and administrative proceedings. In February 2013, Arkansas and Oklahoma extended and augmented the original Statement of Joint Principles and Action to make additional commitments to continue to improve water quality through 2016. Today's release of the two models is expected to help Partnering agencies continue to make progress.

Nutrient pollution is one of America's most widespread, costly and challenging environmental problems, and is caused by excess nitrogen and phosphorus in the air and water. High Phosphorus levels in the Illinois River can be caused by various types of city and industrial discharges as well as uncontrolled run-off. The downstream impacts to Lake Tenkiller show up as 'algal blooms' and low dissolved oxygen concentrations in the lake, which result from nutrients including phosphorus and other environmental conditions.

To learn more about Illinois River Watershed Modeling Program, please visit:
https://www3.epa.gov/region6/water/npdes/illinoisriverwatershed/index.html